

BROWNLOW'S REBEL VENTILATOR.

VOLUME II.

KNOXVILLE, TENN., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1865.

NUMBER 10.

The Knoxville Whig.

BROWNLOW, HAYS & CO.



Banner of freedom, by freemen unfurled!
Shining above the stars of war!
A life in the murky clouds of wrong—
Clouds that shall roll from their beaus of light,
Till the whole round dome is blue and bright.

Knoxville, Tennessee, April 19, 1865.

MESSAGE OF Governor Brownlow to the Legislature of Tennessee.

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:
In accordance with long established custom, and in obedience to the requirements of the Constitution, it becomes my duty to communicate to the Legislature the condition of the State, and to recommend for their consideration such matters as I may deem expedient.

THANKSGIVING.

When we contemplate the distracted condition of our country, the four dreadful years of trial through which we have passed, and the manner in which it has been preserved, our minds naturally turn to Him whose care has been over us, who has protected and preserved us through scenes of blood and carnage, unprecedented in the history of wars. For the preservation of our lives, and certain remnants of our property; for the care and protection of Providence over those who have gone forth to battle, and are still risking their lives in the defense of the principles upon which our happiness and property rest; for life, health, food and raiment, for our safe conduct through untold changes, by a kind Providence; for the prospect of the restoration of law and order in our distracted State; for the gleam of light, looking to peace, now breaking through the clouds that have enveloped us for the four years past; for these and numerous other blessings of which we are the recipients, let us, in all humility and sincerity, render thanks to Almighty God, and let us earnestly implore a continuance of His favor.

SECESSION.

Secession is an abomination that I cannot too strongly condemn, and that you cannot legislate against too much severity. What has it done for our country in the space of four years?—It has plunged our country into civil war, paralyzed our commerce, destroyed our agricultural pursuits, suspended the whole trade and business of our country, lessened the value of our property, destroyed many of the pursuits of life, and has involved the South in irretrievable bankruptcy and ruin.

DESTRUCTION.

What has it done for Tennessee? It has formed odious and unconstitutional military leagues, passed military bills, and inaugurated a system of oppressive taxation, without consulting the people, and then, in mockery of a free election, has required them by their votes to sanction its usurpation, at the point of the bayonet, under the penalty of imprisonment and death. It has offered a premium for crime, in ordering the discharge of criminals from prison on condition that they would enter the rebel ranks, and in recommending the judges to hold no courts for the trial of offenders. It has stained our statute book with the repudiation of honest Northern debts, and has palpably violated the Constitution, by attempting, through its unlawful extension, to do away with the right of suffrage. It has passed laws making it treason to say or do anything in favor of the Government, and has made it treason to aid the Government in its war against the rebels.

WAR ON GUERRILLAS.

The attention of the Legislature is earnestly called to the subject of the roving bands of guerrillas, and squads of robbers and murderers who frequent those counties and portions of counties remote from our military forces. The depredations and murders committed by these are of such frequent occurrence as to have created a general feeling of insecurity among our citizens, causing hundreds to sacrifice their property and abandon their homes and the graves of their parents and loved ones, seeking new homes among strangers in the Northwestern States.

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LET IT BE RATIFIED.

Slavery, secured to the people of the South more permanently by the Constitution of the United States, and by the laws enacted in pursuance thereof, than any species of property claimed by them—not even excepting their lands—will now perish by the war which is brought about to enlarge its power and perpetuate its existence. Let us do our part in this great work by ratifying the action of Congress, and carrying out the wishes of our people. After the ratification by the people of our State of our Amended Constitution, embracing the same proposition, and after your election to the General Assembly, the right to protect the slave that sought refuge from the Constitution of the United States in the power of the proposition submitted by Congress at all necessary. I may be allowed to say, however, that to prohibit slavery in a State requires a change in the State Constitution. Proportions as we find slavery to be of all sorts of political mischief, it is not to be got rid of, under the Constitution, in any other than a constitutional manner. And while the sooner this can be done the better, it does not appear in what part of the Constitution of the United States the power of regulating it at all, in time of peace, is to be found. Fortunately for the future happiness of the country, the Constitution has provided a way in which the people can remedy the great evil, without any questionable exercise of power, and that is by amending the Constitution just as Congress has proposed.

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The slavery question here comes up in a form hitherto not discussed in our politics. It is not a question as to the right of Congress to exclude slavery from the Territories, to legislate upon the matter themselves, nor does it involve the discussion of any doubtful powers, but is the simple proposition to amend the Constitution of the United States in the manner prescribed by that sacred instrument, so as to strike down a monster institution, which has embroiled the Government for half a century, and culminated in the most wicked, uncalled for and bloody war known to the history of the civilized world.

LET IT BE RATIFIED.

Slavery, secured to the people of the South more permanently by the Constitution of the United States, and by the laws enacted in pursuance thereof, than any species of property claimed by them—not even excepting their lands—will now perish by the war which is brought about to enlarge its power and perpetuate its existence. Let us do our part in this great work by ratifying the action of Congress, and carrying out the wishes of our people. After the ratification by the people of our State of our Amended Constitution, embracing the same proposition, and after your election to the General Assembly, the right to protect the slave that sought refuge from the Constitution of the United States in the power of the proposition submitted by Congress at all necessary. I may be allowed to say, however, that to prohibit slavery in a State requires a change in the State Constitution. Proportions as we find slavery to be of all sorts of political mischief, it is not to be got rid of, under the Constitution, in any other than a constitutional manner. And while the sooner this can be done the better, it does not appear in what part of the Constitution of the United States the power of regulating it at all, in time of peace, is to be found. Fortunately for the future happiness of the country, the Constitution has provided a way in which the people can remedy the great evil, without any questionable exercise of power, and that is by amending the Constitution just as Congress has proposed.

Slavery was so far made the subject of constitutional cognizance by the people of the United States, when they adopted the Articles of Confederation, that it found a place in the compromises of that instrument, both in fixing the ratio of representation and the apportionment of direct taxes; and also in requiring the people of a free State to surrender so much of this sovereignty as to have the right to protect the slave that sought refuge from bondage—it would seem too late in the day to question the right of the people to adopt amendments to that instrument, in regard to this or other subjects embraced in its provisions. It becomes us, therefore, to approach this subject with an enlightened statesmanship, and with a degree of moral courage that is not afraid to do right, appealing to the ultimate judgment of mankind to vindicate our action.

It is in this way, and in no other, that a uniform rule can be provided, and an end put thereby, in all time to come, to a possibility of reviving that which has been the fatal cause of all the mischief in the country. To insist upon excluding slavery from a State, by amending her Constitution, before recognizing her right to the rule of the Union, would look awkward, and fall below the dignity of political sagacity. Our State has shown her hand and placed herself square upon the record; and I flatter myself that her representatives here assembled are ready for a measure which shall forever exclude slavery from her borders.

PROTECTION TO FREEDMEN.

Some legislation is necessary for the protection, government and control of the emancipated slave. Among us, this war is over a portion of the people sought to perpetuate slavery will show the emancipated slaves no quarter, and especially that class of slaves who have been rude and violent toward their former owners. What the character of this legislation should be, I leave the good sense, prudence and reflection of the members of the General Assembly to determine. It is the duty of the Legislature to determine to what extent the State shall be overrun with the emancipated slaves of other States